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EIGHTH REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 1230 (1999) of 26 February 1999, the Security Council decided to review every 45 days, on the basis of reports of the Secretary-General, the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) in the light of the progress achieved towards implementation of commitments made by the President of the Central African Republic to the Secretary-General in his letter dated 23 January 1999 (S/1999/98, annex).

2. In accordance with paragraph 18 of resolution 1230 (1999), the previous report on the Central African Republic (S/1999/788) was submitted on 15 July 1999. During the consideration of that report, it was agreed that the next report should be submitted on 30 September after the first round of the presidential election, which, at that time, was scheduled to take place on 29 August 1999. However, the subsequent postponements of the election to 19 September and the announcement of the results on 3 October, as well as the overall political and security situation in the Central African Republic, have made it necessary to delay the submission of the present report. As requested by the Security Council in paragraph 17 of resolution 1230 (1999), the report contains recommendations with regard to a transition to post-conflict peace-building.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

3. Since my seventh report to the Council (S/1999/788), events in the Central African Republic have been dominated to a large extent by the preparations for the presidential election by the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission (CEMI), which was assisted by MINURCA and various external donors, the campaign by political parties and the first round of the election, which took place on 19 September after two consecutive postponements.

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A. Activities of the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission

4. By the end of July, CEMI and its international partners had made substantial progress in preparing for the elections on 29 August, as originally scheduled. However, in late August, CEMI informed MINURCA and donors that some of the lists of voters in the provinces prepared by its electoral staff were defective and could not form the basis of a credible election. Several of the lists contained multiple registrations and other irregularities; their verification of the lists had therefore to be repeated. In the circumstances, CEMI recommended to President Ange-Félix Patassé a postponement of the first round of the election to 12 or 19 September. After extensive and sometimes tense consultations within his Government and with my Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, President Patassé agreed to the dates of 12 September for the first round and 3 October for the second round. A decree to that effect was issued on 12 August.

5. As the expected date of the election of 12 September was drawing closer, it became evident that the required volume of ballot papers could not be printed in time. CEMI, with the support of donors, subcontracted to other printing houses to increase the output of ballot papers. However, when MINURCA assessed the state of preparations for the elections on 10 September, it appeared that there were significant shortages of ballot papers, which could not be corrected in time for the election on 12 September. There had also been attempts on the part of some opposition candidates to disrupt and even prevent the printing of ballot papers. CEMI therefore had no choice but to recommend a second postponement to 19 September, which was announced on 11 September by President Patassé.

B. Political campaign

6. In accordance with the electoral law, the nomination of candidates for the presidential election ended on 29 August. By that date, 10 candidates had been duly registered: Joseph Abossolo (independent), David Dacko (Mouvement pour la démocratie et le développement), Abel Goumba (Front patriotique pour le progrès), Fidèle Guandjika (independent), André Kolingba (Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain) Enoch Dérant Lakoué (Parti social démocrate), Charles Massi (Forum démocratique pour la modernité), Jean-Paul Ngoupande (Parti de l'unité nationale), Ange-Félix Patassé (Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricaine), and Henri Pouzère (independent).

7. The electoral campaign started on 29 August for a two-week period. As it gathered momentum, the tone became more combative and reports indicated that some political parties were discreetly recruiting personnel for militias. While participating in the campaign, several opposition candidates began insisting that the election be postponed by another five weeks. They alleged that President Patassé was rushing the election, and accused MINURCA of helping him to do so. However, it was obvious that a five-week postponement would have meant holding the election after the term of office of the incumbent President expired, and would have led to a constitutional crisis.

8. On 23 August 1999, several candidates sent a letter to President Patassé asking that the election be postponed to a later date. In that letter, they

claimed that electoral preparations left much to be desired, that opposition candidates had no access to the state media and that their security could not be guaranteed. To address those concerns, President Patassé convened a meeting on 27 August of all presidential candidates and political party leaders, as well as the diplomatic community and MINURCA. The Chairman of CEMI informed the meeting that preparations for the election were on course. Prime Minister Anicet Dologuele stated that security conditions for the election would be assured and promised to assign to each candidate four bodyguards from the armed forces. He also assured all candidates that they would have access to the state media, which they had never been denied in the first place. My Special Representative indicated that CEMI's preparations for the election were indeed on course, that there were no major technical reasons why the election could not be held on 12 September and that further delay would seriously complicate the assistance provided by the international community. The meeting ended with the understanding that the election would go ahead as recommended by CEMI on 12 September.

9. As part of their campaign for a further postponement, some of the opposition candidates stated that they would not accept a victory by President Patassé and that, were he to be declared the winner, they would call for mass protests. One candidate, André Kolingba, claimed that he had the support of the army.

10. As the election date drew near, the political situation grew increasingly charged. Unsubstantiated accusations that MINURCA and the international community were less than impartial grew louder. MINURCA staff came under threat of attack in Bangui and in some other parts of the country, where support for the opposition parties was relatively strong. Several clashes took place among militants of some political parties. A violent incident in the Sixth Quarter of Bangui on 10 September between supporters of rival political parties resulted in several deaths and injuries.

11. When, owing to problems related to the printing of ballot papers, CEMI recommended another postponement of one week, the tension eased somewhat. However, a few days before the election two lawyers acting on behalf of the opposition candidates requested the Council of State to declare the presidential decree postponing the election to 19 September unconstitutional.

C. Electoral support by the Mission

12. Throughout the period, MINURCA continued to work closely with CEMI and donors in the preparations for the election. Its electoral unit actively supported the efforts of CEMI, providing technical advice and direct assistance at critical moments. United Nations troops guarded sensitive electoral materials and provided security at electoral sites in Bangui as well as in the provinces. They were assisted by 360 Central African Armed Forces (FACA) soldiers made available for the purpose by the Government, with financial support by France. In consultation with CEMI, MINURCA established 10 deployment sites in the provinces to facilitate logistic support and communications for the electoral observers. In accordance with the concept of operations described in paragraph 22 of my sixth report on MINURCA (S/1999/621), 30 United Nations

long-term observers were deployed to those sites and in Bangui by the end of July.

13. On 26 August, MINURCA started the distribution of electoral materials. Owing to the size of the country and poor infrastructure, extensive air support was required to ensure the timely delivery and retrieval of materials. The United Nations therefore made some of its aircraft available to CEMI.

14. On 1 September, the United Nations began deploying its 200 short-term observers to electoral sites throughout the country. Half of that number were recruited locally from MINURCA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) embassies, consulates, non-governmental organizations and other international organizations operating in the country. The remaining 100 were drawn from United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations offices, predominantly in Africa and Europe. The short-term observers were deployed in 85 teams, of which 50 teams went to the provinces, while the remaining 35 were deployed in Bangui and its environs. The teams were able to observe the process at about 45 per cent of polling stations throughout the country.

15. During the month of August, MINURCA also deployed the essential additional military personnel and equipment to support the election. Thirty-one communications personnel were made available by the Government of Canada and 91 logistic and medical personnel, together with 15 armoured personnel carriers, were made available by the Government of Egypt.

D. Public information

16. MINURCA stepped up its information activities ahead of the election in order to sensitize the population to the electoral process and to explain the United Nation role in supporting CEMI. Candidates from all competing political parties were given access to state media, while CEMI was also given extensive access to Radio MINURCA. Radio MINURCA broadcast many programmes on civil education and the role of the population in the election. Shortwave coverage of the Central African Republic by radio MINURCA improved in early August, with its programmes increasingly reflecting the needs of the local population. From 31 August to 2 September, the United Nations also organized a three-day seminar on the role of the press in the electoral process; 73 journalists participated in the event.

17. On the eve of the election, I issued a statement to the press, which was widely disseminated in local languages, calling on the people of the Central African Republic to exercise their democratic responsibility calmly and responsibly. The statement of the President of the Security Council to the press made on 14 September was also widely circulated in the country.

18. On the weekend of the presidential election, special programmes were broadcast by the United Nations, while on election day, 19 September, Radio MINURCA broadcast the entire day. Officials of the United Nations electoral unit joined Radio MINURCA announcers every hour to provide updates from the field and the Bangui area.

III. CONDUCT OF THE ELECTION

A. Voting

19. The first round of the election took place, as scheduled, on 19 September. Voters turned out in relatively high numbers, estimated at close to 60 per cent. There were some technical problems owing to the shortage of ballot papers in several polling stations in Bangui, as well as in some provincial towns. MINURCA assisted CEMI in resupplying the ballot papers in the provincial areas concerned, where the voting had to be extended to 22 and 23 September. There were a few isolated attempts to intimidate voters and disrupt the electoral process, which were quickly dealt with by local authorities.

20. On 22 September, MINURCA observers and those of the Francophonie and the European Union issued separate statements in which they declared that the election had been conducted in a peaceful, transparent and credible atmosphere. The statements acknowledged that there had been some irregularities, owing mainly to the late opening of polling stations and delays caused by the unstructured compilation of the voters lists. However, such cases were considered to be minor and limited and of insufficient gravity to cast doubts on the fairness and transparency of the election. Also on 22 September, a group of local non-governmental organizations, which had monitored the election as national observers, released their report, the findings of which concurred with the positive conclusions of the international observers.

B. Response of opposition candidates

21. On 23 September, all but one of the opposition candidates issued a joint statement, in which they claimed that the latest postponement of the election was unconstitutional and that irregularities during the election affected their credibility. In particular, they complained that there had been a shortage of ballot papers of opposition candidates in most of the voting centres; that several non-official polling stations had been opened throughout the country; that ballot papers had been unavailable in Ngaoundaye and Birao; and that printing of ballot papers had continued until 21 September.

22. The statement also accused President Patassé of preparing a unilateral declaration of victory and indicated that the opposition would not accept the formal results of the election if they showed President Patassé to be the winner. The opposition therefore urged the Central African people to resist, through civil disobedience, what they said would be President Patassé's "electoral coup d'état". In a radio broadcast on 24 September, the Government stated in response that it would deal ruthlessly with anyone who attempted to disturb the peace in the country.

C. Announcement of the results

23. On 2 October, the President of the Constitutional Court announced the official results of the election, according to which President Patassé received an absolute majority of 51.63 per cent of the vote. The President of the Court

therefore pronounced that President Patassé had been re-elected as President with a mandate of six years and that no second round of voting would be held. President Patassé's new term will start when he is sworn in, which is expected to take place on 17 October. Former President Kolingba received 19.38 per cent of the vote and former President Dacko 11.15 per cent. Overall turnout was 56.4 per cent.

24. In verifying the results of the election, the Constitutional Court also addressed some of the irregularities claimed by the opposition. In particular, the Court did not accept the results from the extension of voting to 22 and 23 September that had occurred in a few areas.

25. The city of Bangui and the provincial capitals remained relatively calm after the announcement of the results. No major incidents were reported. In a radio broadcast after the announcement, President Patassé appealed to the population to ensure peace and security, stressing that the results should not lead to hate and despair, or arrogance and triumphalism. In a statement dated 3 October, eight of the nine opposition candidates continued to reject the results and called for new elections. However, on 4 October, the leading opposition candidate, General Kolingba, made a radio statement in which he said that, although the election had been flawed, this did not justify creating unrest and that he had therefore urged his followers to calm down.

26. Following the announcement of the results and the declaration that there would be no second round of voting, MINURCA started its withdrawal from electoral sites in the provinces, which is to be completed by mid-October.

IV. HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES

27. During the reported period, MINURCA continued to receive reports of cases of arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment of prisoners. There have also been reports of extrajudicial executions, in particular the summary execution of six alleged bandits between 20 and 23 August by the Commander of the Office centrafricaine de répression du banditisme (OCRB). MINURCA demanded that this practice be stopped immediately.

28. Religious and ethnic tensions continued to surface. Some incidents of intimidation and harassment against the Muslim community have also been reported. Trade unionists and journalists reported cases of intimidation in the politically contentious period prior to the election, though many journalists have themselves demonstrated a measure of irresponsibility in their reporting. During the electoral campaign both government and opposition supporters engaged in hate speeches.

29. In addition to its regular advocacy activities, MINURCA implemented a broad programme of human rights training for 180 new police recruits. It also completed a specialized programme of training for 383 police officials, including brigade commanders of the gendarmerie and the judicial police.

30. The situation of refugees in the Central African Republic remains a matter of serious concern. There are presently more than 52,000 refugees of various

nationalities in the country, of whom more than 13,000 are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The presence of some 6,000 refugees in Bangui was a matter of particular concern during the election. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bangui, through the media and other means, advised refugees against getting involved in any political and electoral matters. To ease the tension in the capital, UNHCR also transported refugees from Bangui to the rural settlement in Boubou.

31. Some 2,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo are at present awaiting repatriation in temporary shelters in the port area of Bangui, living in worrisome health and sanitary conditions. Authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are expected soon in Bangui to assist the process of voluntary repatriation.

32. On 6 August, a summit of Heads of State of the region was held in Libreville to address the issue of refugees in Africa. The summit was chaired by President Omar Bongo of the Gabonese Republic and attended by several Heads of State and Foreign Ministers from the Central African region. The main subject of discussion was the need to establish an intra-regional mechanism aimed at helping the countries concerned to ensure better control and management of the movements of refugees and displaced persons in the region.

V. MILITARY AND SECURITY ASPECTS

A. Security concerns arising from the election

33. Following a general increase in tension during the electoral campaign, security was tightened around United Nations installations and the movements of staff were limited. MINURCA troops increased patrolling throughout Bangui and its environs and made preparations to deal with disturbances during the election and after the announcement of the results.

34. My Special Representative kept close contact with local authorities, President Patassé and opposition candidates. He urged all concerned to remain calm and to respect the outcome of the election. Mr. Adeniji also visited or contacted several regional leaders, in particular President Bongo of Gabon, and asked them to exercise their influence with both President Patassé and the main opposition leaders. In response, President Bongo sent a high-level delegation to the Central African Republic for discussions with the Government and the opposition.

B. Impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

35. As described in my previous report, following the fall of Gbadolite to Congolese rebels under the control of Jean-Pierre Bemba, the leader of the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), thousands of civilian and military refugees started crossing to the Mobaye area of the Central African Republic. Another influx of refugees occurred when the town of Zongo, across the river from Bangui, was taken by MLC troops on 30 July. The total influx reached about 20,000, which included about 7,000 Congolese government troops.

36. The presence of these refugees, and in particular of soldiers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, created several problems. The Mobaye area could not cope with such a large number of refugees, which placed a heavy burden on the limited infrastructure and social amenities. There were also fears that the refugees' presence would hamper electoral campaigns in the area. However, thanks to the logistic support provided by the Government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the form of transport aircraft, all Congolese military personnel have been repatriated, without their weapons, to Kinshasa. Mr. Bemba visited the Central African Republic twice during the reporting period for consultations with the Central African authorities.

37. Frequent patrols of the Oubangui river by rebel Congolese soldiers who now control Zongo continue to cause anxiety among the population of Bangui. MINURCA is often inundated with calls about alleged landings in Bangui by Congolese soldiers on unknown missions. Similar patrols by the Special Force for the Defence of Republican Institutions (FORSDIR), rather than give assurance, create fear. MINURCA was therefore obliged to commence regular patrols of the river by its own small amphibious unit.

C. Disarmament and the destruction of weapons

38. MINURCA disarmament activities were intensified in the period before the presidential election. There were persistent reports that some of the weapons brought into the Mobaye and Bangui areas by retreating Congolese troops had not been surrendered but clandestinely sold by the soldiers to support themselves and their families who had fled with them from Gbadolite and Zongo. Only a few of the weapons could be recovered. However, some of the weapons that had disappeared in the wake of the 1997 army mutinies were recovered by the United Nations, bringing the total number of weapons of all categories recovered in the period from December 1998 to 128 light arms, 21,724 rounds of ammunition and 243 explosives. My Special Representative is discussing with the Government the best way to dispose of those weapons.

D. Civilian police training

39. The MINURCA civilian police component continued its training programmes for the Central African police and gendarmerie. A six-month training course for 180 recruits started on 19 July. The objective of the programme is to provide the young cadres with a general training course, covering the professional and technical fields, to enable them to undertake police duties effectively in a democratic setting. By the end of 1999, 511 police officers will have been fully trained by the United Nations.

40. With regard to the gendarmerie, the last stage of training for brigade commanders was completed on 28 August, making a total of 383 officers prepared since the beginning of the programme. MINURCA is currently putting together a compendium of training manuals for the use of Central African instructors, who are already trained by MINURCA, to assure proper training of future police and gendarmerie officers after the departure of the Mission.

VI. ECONOMIC ASPECTS

41. Subsequent to the assessment made on 2 July by the Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of the process of implementation of the development programme under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility Agreement, the Board approved the release of the second allocation of some 7 billion CFA francs under the Agreement. This, as well as bilateral budget support assistance by China and Nigeria, has enabled the Government to meet some obligations, such as its contractual payments to the Bretton Woods Institutions, the payment of some salary arrears and payments to soldiers being sent on retirement.

42. Although the Government does not lack the political will to institute the much-needed economic reforms, there is a need for further rigorous measures for greater transparency in the conduct of government operations. Revenue generation by way of receipts from customs duties, which is the mainstay of government resources, has again been below anticipated levels. This is due in part to the low economic activities in anticipation of the presidential election. Prospective investors are waiting to make a proper evaluation of the political terrain following the installation of a new Government before taking the final plunge on economic cooperation. However, they continue to be seriously concerned at the state of security and stability in the post-MINURCA period in the absence of restructured armed forces. Subject to completion by the Government of the measures agreed upon earlier, and to adequate security arrangements, the World Bank will proceed with the appraisal of the fourth structural adjustment credit in November 1999.

43. One of the prior actions for structural adjustment credit appraisal is the Government's ability to propose a credible financial plan for gradual elimination of the financial deficit in the cotton sector, within the macroeconomic framework agreed with IMF, and curtailing recourse to Bank credit. Such a financial plan is likely to include a roll-back of producer prices, which were increased against world market trends.

44. Progress has been made in the area of privatization of government-owned enterprises. PETROCA, the state-owned petroleum company, has been liquidated. The agreement between the Government and the buyers has not been signed yet, probably because the latter are awaiting the results of the presidential election, but the signature is expected to take place shortly. Meanwhile, PETROCA remains under the direction of a liquidation team. In the banking sector, privatization of the Union bancaire en Afrique centrale (UBAC) is proceeding well, with a proposal for the purchase of 51 per cent of the shares by a Cameroon-based consortium.

VII. RESTRUCTURING AND DEMOBILIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

45. As I mentioned in my last report, the four bills on the restructuring of the armed forces, which were adopted by the National Assembly on 3 May 1999, were not promulgated into law by President Patassé. He instead referred them to the Constitutional Court, which advised on 2 July that several provisions in each of the laws violated the Constitution. The Government has established a

committee to incorporate the observations of the Constitutional Court into amended draft bills for the consideration of the National Assembly when it reconvenes in October. According to the Government and the President of the National Assembly, the process of consideration would be accelerated with a view to a quick adoption and promulgation.

46. Notwithstanding that development, the Government has begun taking the first steps in the restructuring of the armed forces. It has earmarked funds to pay the salary arrears and other benefits of some of 630 soldiers to be retired. Since then, the process has advanced. The 630 soldiers were divided into four groups scheduled to retire in April, July, October and December, in accordance with their length of service. The first two batches were paid in July and were discharged. The third batch was paid in early September and will soon be retired. The fourth batch is due to be paid in early November.

47. The first two groups insisted that apart from their salary arrears, they should also be paid a regular salary until December 1999. However, the Government was able to convince the soldiers to withdraw that demand. On 30 August, a group of soldiers arrived at the Finance Ministry and demanded to be paid immediately. They took the Treasurer-General and his staff hostage, and threatened to blow up the building. Interventions by the Minister of Defence and the Prime Minister were rebuffed and the authorities therefore sought the good offices of MINURCA and my Special Representative. On 3 October, Mr. Adeniji convened a meeting of representatives of the soldiers and the Ministers of Defence and Finance, and the Prime Minister's military adviser. After a very tense session agreement was reached on a calendar of payment to each of the two groups.

48. To date, donors have made no commitments to provide the much-needed $3.1 million for the programme for the demobilization and reintegration of members of the armed forces. Those funds would facilitate the retirement of a large number of soldiers, which would create vacancies that would, in turn, allow the induction of new recruits to achieve a balanced multi-ethnic composition of the armed forces.

49. Since my previous report, there has been no change in the functions of FORSDIR. In spite of several interventions by my Special Representative, FORSDIR continues to perform duties that properly belong to other branches of the security forces. This remains a cause of concern to the opposition and to the population in general. In a recent meeting with my Special Representative, President Patassé affirmed that FORSDIR would remain deployed at key areas in and near Bangui, as it was the only organized and reliable force at his Government's disposal.

VIII. TRANSITION TO POST-CONFLICT PEACE-BUILDING

50. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 1230 (1999), the Security Council requested me to consider what role the United Nations might play in the transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building in the Central African Republic and also requested me, in consultation with the Government of the Central African Republic, to submit recommendations on a possible United Nations presence in the Central African Republic after the termination of

MINURCA. In its resolution 1230 (1999), the Council expressed its intention to commence the reduction of MINURCA personnel 15 days after the conclusion of the presidential election in the Central African Republic with a view to a full termination of the Mission no later than 15 November.

51. I have given due consideration to this requirement and would like to share with the Security Council some observations in that regard. To date, the international community has made considerable investments in the Central African Republic and has provided its people an opportunity, including through the presence of MINURCA, to work towards national reconciliation and to begin the process of economic recovery. At the same time, it was always understood that such efforts were aimed at creating a situation in which the Central African Republic would be able to continue those processes with international assistance by donors and United Nations agencies and programmes. Admittedly, the Government of the Central African Republic has not fully availed itself of that opportunity. Several vital reforms, which are particularly necessary for long-term security and to which the Central African authorities had committed themselves, have yet to be implemented.

52. At present, there are various aspects of the situation in the Central African Republic that need to be borne in mind in the context of a transition to post-conflict peace-building. The political climate in the country remains tense. The opposition continues to challenge the results of the election, although some recent statements by its leaders indicate a gradual acknowledgement of President Patassé's victory. Suspicions as well as mutual accusations of acquisition of weapons and of recruitment of militias by political leaders persist. Another area of concern is the present condition of the armed forces. Though lacking in equipment and discipline, they are still capable of destabilizing the political and security environment. The restructuring of the armed forces has seen little progress and should be among the new Government's highest priorities.

53. Also requiring attention are such issues as economic and social reform and the restoration of a level of confidence that would encourage foreign investment. It is imperative therefore that, in order to tackle the challenges facing the country, the new Government and the opposition work together in a constructive relationship and in a manner that strengthens democracy in the country.

54. The security situation in the region also needs to be taken into consideration. Several neighbours of the Central African Republic are involved in serious conflict situations, which have already spilled over into the Republic. At the same time, a return of instability in the Central African Republic might pose dangers to its neighbouring countries and lead to additional spillover of conflicts throughout the region, and could further complicate efforts to bring peace to Central Africa.

55. I am also mindful of the strong wish of the Government of the Central African Republic that MINURCA remain in the country well beyond 15 November 1999, to continue to provide a measure of security during the period following the election. The opposition, for its part, has also expressed apprehension with regard to the consequences of a withdrawal by MINURCA without

restructured national armed forces in place. Their preoccupations include fears of being subjected to oppression by FORSDIR. United Nations agencies and programmes operating in the Central African Republic believe that it would be important for the international community to assist strengthening security in the country, which would allow them to proceed with their programmes.

56. In the circumstances, I believe it would be appropriate to recommend a short but gradual transition from United Nations peacekeeping involvement in the Central African Republic to post-conflict peace-building. During such a transition, MINURCA would continue to provide assistance in the implementation of major reforms and its good offices to promote national reconciliation. At the same time, it would also facilitate, in coordination with relevant United Nations agencies and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions, a smooth transformation from the current international involvement to post-conflict peace-building. The MINURCA military component would continue to discharge its present security functions in Bangui, which it would gradually hand over to local security and law enforcement forces. The proposed transition would also allow MINURCA to complete a six-month training course for 180 local police recruits.

57. To facilitate this period, a serious and concerted effort will be required to speed up the programme of demobilization and reintegration of soldiers. Along with the restructuring of the armed forces, those activities will obviously require additional financial support from the international community. In that regard, the Secretariat is planning to convene a meeting in New York in the coming months to solicit much-needed funds to support relevant programmes.

58. During the transition period, MINURCA would gradually reduce its military strength. At present, the withdrawal and repatriation of military personnel, which had been deployed to support the election, has begun. I would propose that the reduction of MINURCA be conducted in stages. A first batch of three infantry companies would depart from Bangui by mid-December 1999, with a second batch of two infantry companies and a logistic support element departing in January 2000. A third group, consisting of an infantry company, a light tank company and a medical unit, would then depart by 15 February 2000, leaving an element of 185 military personnel, which would be needed to provide security for United Nations personnel and protect United Nations assets in Bangui during the liquidation of the mission. During the transitional period, the Mission's substantive and administrative personnel would also be reduced in a gradual fashion, taking into account any requirements by a post-conflict peace-building presence.

59. To finalize the possible mandate and requirements of a post-conflict peace-building presence of the United Nations in the Central African Republic, I intend to dispatch shortly a small multi-disciplinary mission to Bangui, led by the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP. The Mission will proceed on the assumption that, in accordance with the wishes of the authorities of the Central African Republic, the United Nations will maintain a presence in the country following the termination of the mandate of MINURCA. The presence would take the form of a small political office, to be established after the end of the political presence of MINURCA on 15 February 2000. The functions of such an office would be based on the proposals contained in paragraphs 13 to 15 of my

sixth report (S/1999/621). At the present stage, I envisage that the office would closely monitor developments in the political, socio-economic, human rights and security spheres. In particular, it would facilitate a continued dialogue among the political actors, so as to promote reconciliation and national unity. It would also provide good offices, when necessary, in resolving disputes among political parties and support efforts aimed at promoting democratization and good governance. The office would offer political guidance and a framework for integrating the activities of the United Nations system in the Central African Republic in support of the new Government's post-conflict peace-building programmes, including the promotion of a culture of peace and human rights programmes. In that regard, it would be expected to work closely with United Nations agencies, in particular UNDP, and the Bretton Woods institutions to assist in the economic recovery of the country and to encourage the continuation of the necessary economic reform programmes. In addition, it would also be my intention to include in the planned office a small number of military and civilian police advisers to follow closely security-related reforms to be implemented by the Government in cooperation with bilateral donors, including the restructuring of the armed forces and demobilization and reintegration programmes. I intend to revert to the Security Council with detailed proposals on such a small office in early December 1999.

IX. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

60. As indicated in my previous report to the Security Council (S/1999/788, para. 50), the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/238 of 8 June 1999, appropriated an amount of $33.4 million for the operation of MINURCA for the period from 1 July to 15 November 1999 and its subsequent liquidation and administrative closing until 30 June 2000. With regard to the estimated costs associated with the supportive role that MINURCA has been authorized to play in the conduct of the presidential election, I have obtained authorization from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to enter into commitments to incur additional expenditure in the amount of $6.7 million.

61. Should the Council approve my recommendation contained in paragraphs 56-58 above, I shall inform the Council of the related requirements and shall seek additional resources from the General Assembly accordingly.

62. As at 15 September 1999, unpaid assessed contributions to the MINURCA special account amounted to $67.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,877.9 million. With regard to the trust fund for the support of activities of MINURCA, contributions as at 30 September 1999 totalled $0.87 million, with expenditures authorized in the full amount of contributions received.

X. OBSERVATIONS

63. It is gratifying that, in spite of high levels of tension during the electoral campaign, high numbers of Central African voters went to the polls in a peaceful and calm manner. In doing so, the people of the Central African Republic once again demonstrated their desire for peace, stability and

development and I congratulate them on their sense of responsibility and calm during that milestone event.

64. Credit is also due to the considerable efforts of the international community, which made it possible for the election to be properly supported. The much-needed bilateral assistance provided by the Governments of Canada, China, Egypt, France, Gabon, Japan, Nigeria and the United States of America, the European Union and UNDP were, without doubt, instrumental in that regard.

65. Now it is up to the people and leaders - Government and opposition - of the Central African Republic to build on that important achievement and to proceed with all due speed with the process of major reform and national reconciliation. I hope that all political parties will now put the politics of the electoral campaign behind them and establish an effective and constructive dialogue, which is essential to enable the country to move forward.

66. In these endeavours, I hope that the Central African Republic would be able to count on the continuing assistance of the international community. As described in section VIII above, I recommend that such assistance now proceed from the peacekeeping phase to post-conflict peace-building. Having said that, I am conscious of the risks involved in a transition that may not give the Central African Republic enough time to fully prepare itself for the next challenging phase. The potentially destabilizing effects of conflicts in the region must also be borne in mind.

67. I therefore recommend that the Security Council authorize a gradual reduction of MINURCA during a three-month transition period, with a view to ending the Mission on 15 February 2000. For several years, the international community, including MINURCA and its predecessor the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements, has done much to assist the people and Government of the Central African Republic on the path of national reconciliation and economic recovery. I trust that they will now be prepared to begin assuming full responsibility for the future of their country, which, in the final analysis, can only be changed for the better by the Central Africans themselves. At the same time, I trust that the international community will continue to encourage and support all positive developments in the Central African Republic. I therefore call upon donors to provide much-needed financial assistance and to support the restructuring of the armed forces as well as the process of economic and social reform and development in the Central African Republic.

68. Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, to the Force Commander, Major General Barthélémy Ratanga (Gabon), to all MINURCA personnel, as well as to United Nations agencies and programmes operating in the country, for their tireless efforts and commendable dedication during the reporting period, in particular during the presidential election.

Annex

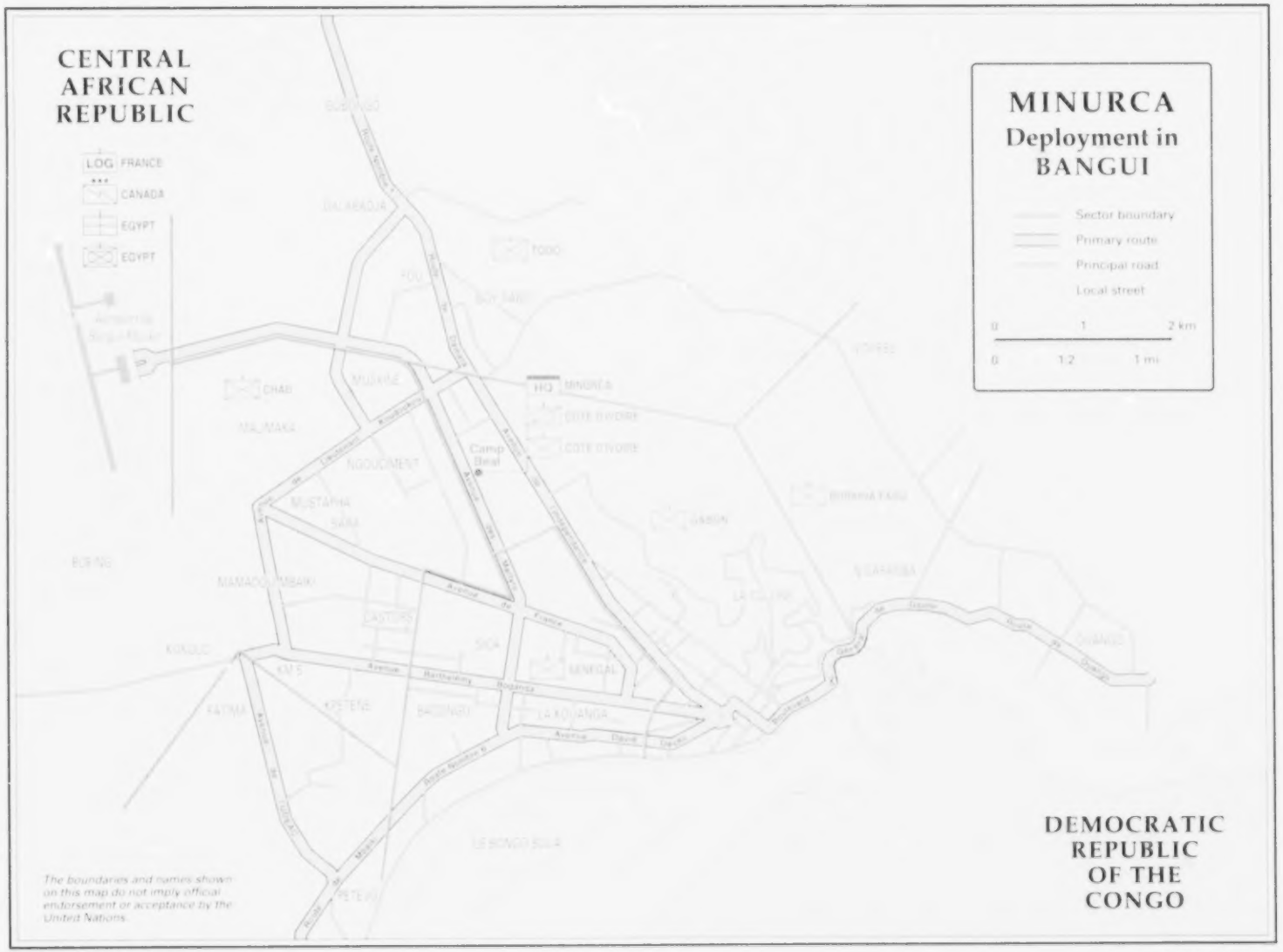
United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic: contributions as at 7 October 1999

Country	Staff observers	Support unit	Troops	Total
Burkina Faso	6	-	120	126
Canada	4	57	-	61[a]
Chad	6	-	120	126
Côte d'Ivoire	10	15	210	235
Egypt	8	291	120	419
Gabon	8	-	120	128[b]
Senegal	9	-	120	129
Togo	6	-	120	126
Total	57	363	930	1 350[c]

[a] Does not include national support elements (23).

[b] In addition to the Force Commander.

[c] In addition to 24 civilian police observers from Benin (2), Cameroon (1), Côte d'Ivoire (1), France (7), Mali (6), Portugal (2), Senegal (3) and Tunisia (2).



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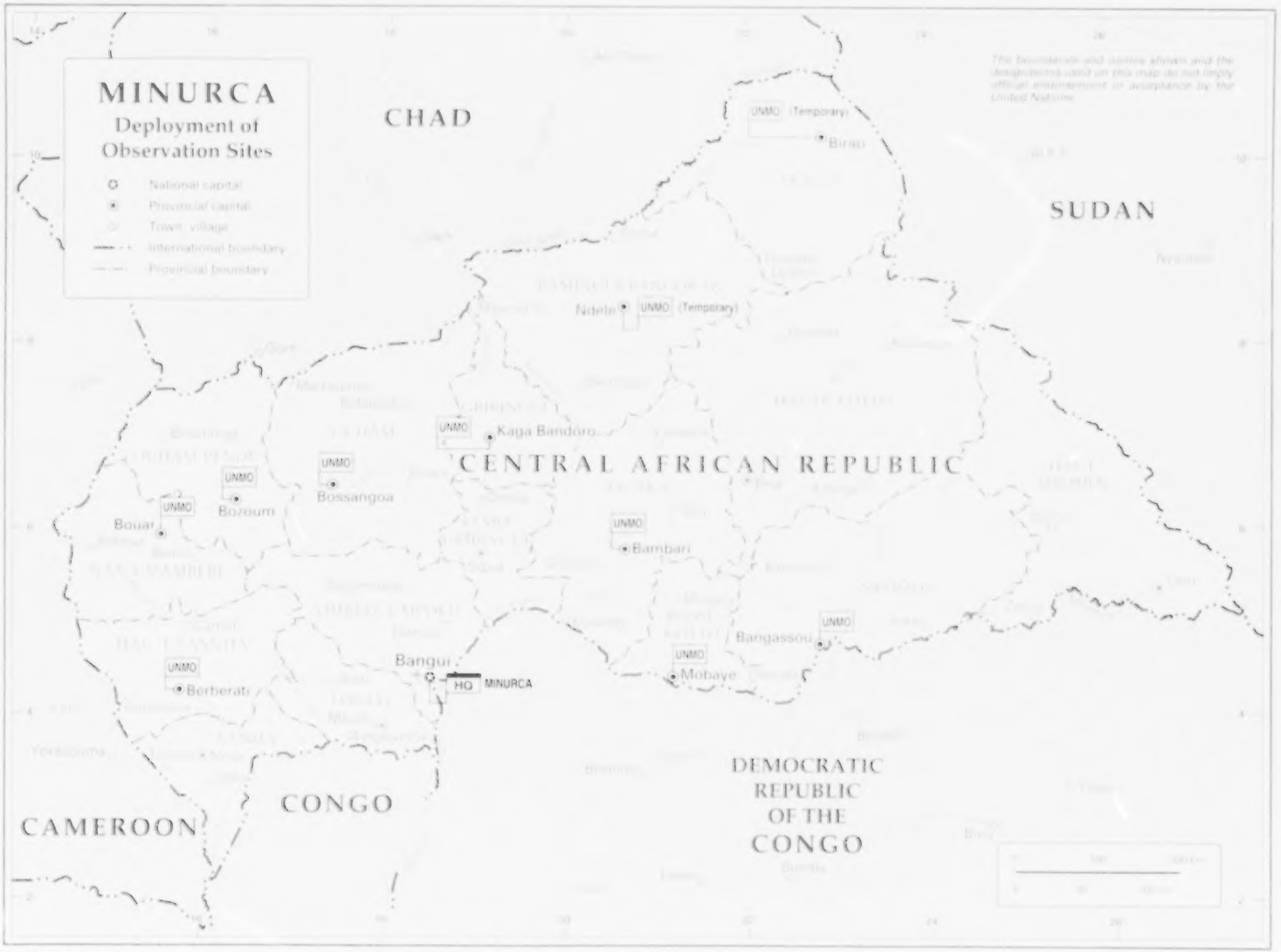
MINURCA
Deployment of
Observation Sites
National capital
Provincial capital
Town, village
International boundary
Provincial boundary
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
CHAD
SUDAN
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
CAMEROON
CONGO
DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC
OF THE
CONGO
UNMO (Temporary)
Birao
Ndele
UNMO (Temporary)
UNMO
Kaga Bandoro
UNMO
Bossangoa
UNMO
Bozoum
UNMO
Bouar
UNMO
Bambari
UNMO
Bangassou
UNMO
Mobaye
Bangui
HQ
MINURCA
UNMO
Berberati